DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 276 006 CS 209 936

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TITLE Minnesota Journalists as Elected Officials, 1923-1938: An Historical Study of an Ethical/Conflict of Interest Question.
PUB DATE Aug 86
NOTE 34p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (69th, Norman, OK, August 3-6, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Historical Materials (060)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Codes of Ethics; *Conflict of Interest; *Ethics; *Journalism; Media Research; *Multiple Employment; Public Officials; Role Conflict
IDENTIFIERS *Journalism History; Journalism Research; *Journalists; Media Ethics; *Minnesota; Professional Ethics

ABSTRACT

In an effort to document the historical evolution of journalists' political involvement and determine when it began to affect journalistic behavior, a case study examined the personal and professional lives of journalists in Minnesota practicing in the 1920s and 1930s. The study investigated whether these journalists (1) were elected to public offices, (2) chose to leave their journalism positions during their terms of office, and (3) if so, whether they did so out of any expressed recognition of the possible conflict of interest involved. Findings revealed that many Minnesota journalists sought and held elective public office on all government levels, and that few left their journalism positions during their term of office. In addition, findings showed that the rate of office holding by the journalist/politicians increased during the period studied. Little evidence exists to indicate that the few journalists who gave up their positions did so because of concern about conflict of interest. In fact, findings suggest some journalists were comfortable serving dual roles in their communities. Examination of the Minnesota Editorial Association's proceedings show no sessions on the topic of professional ethics. This lack of address suggests that the conflict of interest issue may never have occurred to many journalist/politicians. Nine pages of notes conclude the document. (JD)

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MINNESOTA JOURNALISTS AS ELECTED OFFICIALS, 1923-1938: AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF AN ETHICAL/CONFLICT OF INTEREST QUESTION

Submitted to the History Division of the AEJMC in 1986

by

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MINNESOTA JOURNALISTS AS ELECTED OFFICIALS, 1923-1938: AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF AN ETHICAL/CONFLICT OF INTEREST QUESTION

The contemporary debate about media ethics has intensified as nations move from industrially-based to information-based societies, an era when it is especially appropriate that media professionals and the publics they serve should increasingly ponder and analyze the conduct with which information is handled. Media ethics refers broadly to the conduct of journalists and the media as social institutions, and to be professionally ethical means one conforms to the standards of conduct set by a profession. In contemporary discussions of media ethics, the essential root of concern has to do with professionalism, and the degree of accuracy, or truth, with which information to be shared publicly is selected, shaped, and presented.[1]

The study of historical developments of media ethics could provide knowledge and insights about trends and conditions surrounding past debates, and enhance the contemporary discussion and make it more productive and purposeful. Historical research would determine, for example, when each issue, now encompassed by the term media ethics, emerged historially, and what conditions gave impetus to or accompanied that emergence. But a review of the literature reveals that no comprehensive historical studies

of journalism ethics have been published, and other than mentioning that, in 1923, the American Newspaper Publishers Association established the "Canons of Journalism," the authors of the 20th century's major communications history texts devote little attention to the topic of ethics.[2]

Research reported here investigated one very specific media ethics issue historically--conflict of interest as related to journalists' direct involvement in politics. Conflicts of interest today are defined as "any interest or loyalty of an individual which may conflict at times with another of his or her interests or loyalties."[3] It is not uncommon, for example, to read or hear about journalists being reprimanded, sanctioned or fired for engaging in partisan political activity.[4] Such measures are often justified by a belief that political behavior raises questions about the ethical standards of journalists and the newspapers they work for.[5] But concerns about journalists' political involvement as an ethical problem have not always been expressed, and even now, such behavior is seldom addressed squarely for the conflict of interest issue it raises.[6]

In an effort to document the historical evolution of this journalistic standard, and to determine when it may have begun to affect journalistic behavior, a case study of the personal and professional lives of journalists was completed for one short period, 1923-38, in one state, Minnesota. The primary questions were whether journalists practicing in the 1920s and 1930s became politically involved as elected officials, and, if so, whether they remained in their journalistic positions during their terms of office. While the study's results are not generalizable, the

evidence found and reported here is a beginning, and provides much needed departure points for future research in the history of media ethics.

Historical Background: Media Ethics, Conflicts of Interest, and the Study of Occupational Groups

The study of media ethics, and more particularly, conflicts of interest, are part of a broader field of scholarly inquiry that has become increasingly important to historians and others interested in the evolution of the occupational structure, the attributes and historical transformation of occupations and professions, and the impact of such groups on American culture.[7] One such scholar, Burton J. Bledstein, commented on the pervasiveness of the concept of professionalism during the late-nineteenth century:

> Americans after 1870 . . . committed themselves to a culture of professionalism which over the years has established the thoughts, habits, and responses most modern Americans have taken for granted, a culture which has admirably served individuals who aspire to think very well of themselves.[8]

As occupational groups adopted the accouterments of professionalism, they often claimed to serve the public, rather than their own self-interests, and such claims were followed by increasing public scrutiny of their behavior. Before the concept of conflict of interest developed, public officials, and others, who resolved clashes between their private and public duty in favor of personal advantage, were accused of corruption. But later only the most odious and greedy officials were labeled corrupt, and the term "conflict of interest" was coined to encompass less blatant cases.[9]

The historical roots of journalists' involvement in politics run deep in America to the beginning of the new nation. The party press era, when journalists were openly partisan in news columns and in behavior, spanned the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and many examples of journalists who sought and held political offices can be cited for the 20th century.[10]

But like many other occupational groups, in an effort to upgrade their status, associations of journalists and newspaper staffs began early in the century to draft and adopt codes of ethics. The first was established by the Kansas Editorial Association in 1910,[11] and in 1923, the American Society of Newspaper Editors instituted the "Canons of Journalism," a code which stated, "Freedom from all obligations except that of fidelity to the public interest is vital."[12] Some codes were clearer about journalists' involvement in politics. The Missouri Press Association code, for example, published in 1921, warned:

> No person who controls the policy of a newspaper should at the same time hold office or have affiliations, the duties of which conflict with the public service that this newspaper should render.[13]

Also raising questions about journalism ethics in the early 20th century were the many journalism education units being established and developed in the nation's colleges and universities. The founders of the country's first schools of journalism hoped, according to media ethics scholars, to "solve the problems for their decades by comparing journalism to law and medicine as a public trust, seeking for their occupation a professional status equal to that of those more venerable fields."[14]

Such schools offered courses on journalism ethics,[15] and some college textbooks warned journalism students against involvement in politics in their future careers. Author Albert F. Henning, whose purpose was to teach students to deal with ethical problems in future jobs as reporters, editors, and publishers, comments that a journalist should avoid partisanship in political and other affairs "when such conduct would compromise the position of the paper he represents."[16]

The 1920s and 1930s have also been noted as decades in which newspapers and journalists supposedly increased their independence from partisan politics. Journalism historian Alfred M. Lee, for example, maintained in 1937 that the "professed political independence of dailies increased rapidly between 1899 and 1929."[17]

Noting the growth of professional groups and professionalism in American culture, the warnings of professional associations' codes of ethics against affiliations with outside interests, the literature's references to the dangers of such involvements, and historians' statements on the ever-growing independence of newspapers during this period, one is encouraged to hypothesize that fewer and fewer journalists became involved in politics as the early decades of the twentieth century progressed.

Newspapers and Minnesota During the 1920s and 1930s

The period studied, 1923 to 1938, spans two very different, but in some ways similar, decades in American and Minnesota history. The 1920s, often casually referred to as the Roaring

Twenties, were marked by innovation and technological progress in many areas; the industrialization and urbanization of the country continued at a fast pace, and business and industry profitted greatly. But the Twenties also brought uncertainties and hardships in the economic and social spheres. As the period began, American soldiers were readjusting to civilian life after returning from World War I; the nation's farmers were once again experiencing economic hard times after only a few years of prosperity during the war; and immigrants were attempting to adjust to life in America. In addition, many suffered from the effects of the Red Scare, a rise in Ku Klux Klan activities, and bitter worker strikes in the nation's steel mills and coal mines.[18]

With the stock market crash in 1929, the country's economic and social problems worsened on most fronts. At first, officials viewed the future with optimism, but as the months and years passed, the crisis grew to dismal proportions. President Hoover's remedies did not take hold, and in 1932, the country's growing interest in Franklin D. Roosevelt's burgeoning New Deal swept the Democrats to victory on a tide of new hope for the future. Minnesota, too, departed in 1932 from its staunchly Republican partisanship, and, for the first time in history, the state's populous supported the election of a Democrat to the White House, and elected a Farmer-Labor Party candidate, Floyd B. Olson, to the governorship.[19]

In Minnesota, as in the rest of the nation, newspapers prospered during the 1920s and 1930s, and advances were made in many areas of the state's journalism community.[20]

In 1931, the state supported 646 newspapers, including 40 dailies, 486 weeklies, and 120 others published less frequently. Working on Minnesota papers in 1930 were 1,102 editors and reporters (845 men and 257 women); 579 of this group were employed by papers in Minneapolis, St. Paul, or Duluth, the state's three largest cities. Minnesota's first school of journalism was founded in 1927, although journalism classes were offered at the University of Minnesota preceeding the establishment of its new journalism school.[21]

Method

A case study involving a collective biography of the personal, journalistic, and community lives of a group of Minnesota journalists was undertaken. The questions guiding research were: 1) Did Minnesota journalists practicing in the 1920s and 1930s seek and/or hold elective public office? 2) If so, did they leave their journalism positions during their terms of office? 3) And, if so, was there a decrease of such political office-holding over the decades of the 1920s and 1930s, suggesting, perhaps, a growing sensitivity among journalists to the dangers implicit in the codes of ethics and other literature?

The lives and careers of a group of Minnesota journalists from 1923 to 1938 were examined to determine: 1) whether they were elected to public office during their careers as journalists; 2) whether those elected left their journalism positions during their terms of office; and, 3) whether those giving up one of the two positions did so out of any expressed recognition that a conflict would be created in their roles as

purveyors of the news of the community.

More specifically, the research sought to determine:

1) how many, if any, Minnesota journalists were elected to public office on the local, county, state or national levels during the period 1923 to 1938 (any journalists who did hold public office will be referred to as journalist/politicians, which will be defined later, throughout the rest of the paper);

2) if any journalist/politicians were identified among the group of journalists studied, did they leave their journalism positions during their terms of office;

3) did the number of journalist/politicians who held public office decrease, increase, or remain constant during the period studied;

4) how did the journalists included in the study train for their journalism careers (on the job, in trade schools, or at a college or university);

5) what professional affiliations within the journalism field did the journalists in the study maintain, if any;

6) what political parties did the journalists included in the study support or participate in, if any;

7) what community organizations or community concerns, other than political, did such journalists participate in; and,

8) among any journalist/politicians identified in the research, was there a difference in the rate of such office holding between those in the daily and weekly press.

The year 1923 was chosen, in part, as the starting point because that year the American Society of Newspaper Editors published the "Canons of Journalism." Such an act signifies that at least some journalists then believed that members of the profession should adhere to ethical standards.[22]

A second reason for studying the period 1923 to 1938 relates to Minnesota's political history. The year 1923 was a turning

point in Minnesota politics, for in the previous fall's statewide elections, the Farmer-Labor Party surpassed the Democratic Party as the state's second most powerful political party. Several of its candidates were elected to the state's governorship over the period 1931 to 1938. The year 1938 was chosen as the research's end date because the Farmer-Labor Party candidate for governor, Elmer A. Benson, was defeated by Republican candidate Harold E. Stassen, signalling the end of the Farmer-Labor Party's brief replacement of the Democratic Party as the state's second most powerful party.[23]

Journalists affiliated with general circulating daily and weekly newspapers throughout the state were included in the study. General circulating newspapers were defined as those publishing the news of the neighborhood, community, state, nation, and/or world for the general population.[24] A list of all of the state's dailies was compiled, and their number totalled 39. Secondly, a list of all of the general circulating newspapers published in the state's 87 county seats was compiled, and a systematic random sample totalling 72 papers was selected.[25]

At that point, the number of weekly and daily newspapers to be included in the study was 111, and the next step involved identifying such papers' owners and/or editors. After failing to identify 13 of these paper's owners and/or editors,[26] the total number of newspapers included in the study was reduced to 98.

The journalists studied included any identified as publishers or editors--publisher being defined as any individual who owned or published one of the papers, and editor as any

individual who had editorial responsibilities on the papers in question from 1923 to 1938.[27]

"Journalist/politician" was defined as any journalist who sought or held any one of the following public offices: 1) on the local level, any position requiring a campaign and general election (for example, mayors, and members of the town or city council); 2) on the county level, any position requiring a campaign and general election (for example, county board or commission members, county attorneys, and county auditors); on the state level, any individual elected to the state legislature or governorship; and 4) on the national level, anyone elected to the United States Senate or House of Representatives.[28]

Subsequent research focused on identifying journalists to be included in the study, and this was carried out in two steps: first, journalist/politicians holding the above-named elective public offices on the state and national levels were identified;[29] and second, the names of the publishers and/editors of the sample of the state's county seat newspapers were identified, and biographical research was conducted to determine if they held local and/or county public elective offices.[30]

As biographical research on the lives of the journalists progressed, six hypotheses were developed about possible relationships between the rate of public office holding, and the journalists' personal, community, and journalistic lives.

1) The rate of office holding of journalist/politicians would decrease over the period of the study, 1923-38.

Increasing attention to journalism ethics, and a growing sense, at least among some journalists, that ethics and

objectivity in journalism were desirable, encourages this hypothesis.

2) Journalist/politicians would tend to originate from smaller communities than non-journalist/politicians.

This hypothesis is based on the assumption that community size is related to elective public-office holding. A common generalization in the social sciences is that patterns of behavior vary, depending on the social structure of a community or locality, resulting in a phenomenon called the "interlocking directorate" in places where there is a low degree of differentiation in the social structure. One can thus hypothesize that where there is a low degree of differentiation in social organizations, such as in small communities, individuals who are socially powerful in one sector will tend to be powerful in others.[31]

3) Journalist/politicians as a group will have less formal education on the college or university levels than the other journalists in the study.

Such hypothesis is based on the assumption that journalists with more formal education would have increased opportunities to be exposed to discussions of journalism ethics and objectivity.

4) Journalist/politicians as a group would have a lower rate of memberships or other activities in professional journalistic organizations.

It was assumed that journalists with a higher rate of memberships or other activities in professional journalistic organizations would more frequently be exposed to discussions of journalism ethics and objectivity.

5) The number of Farmer-Labor journalist/politicians would increase during the first years of the period, peak, and then decrease during the later years of the period.

It was assumed that journalists with a personal interest in politics would be affected by the political temper of a period. In 1923, the Farmer-Labor Party replaced the Democratic Party as the state's second most influential political party, but in 1938 they fell back into third place, and this may have affected the number of Farmer-Labor journalist/politicians.

6) Journalist/politicians as a group would be older than the other journalists studied.

This hypothesis is based on the idea that younger journalists, most of whom received their formal educations and journalism training during a later period than older journalists, may have had greater opportunities for exposure to information on journalism ethics and objectivity. Some working journalists in the period were born before the United States Civil War; such individuals likely received formal education and journalism training when it was common for journalists to be elected public officials.

Data Totals[32]

In sum, 145 Minnesota journalists who published or edited 98 state daily and weekly general circulating newspapers during 1923 through 1938 were the essential components of analysis, and six major variables were studied for each: birth, education/training, journalism professional activities, politics, public offices, and other community activities.

Twenty-one journalists were identified as holding elective public offices on the state and/or national levels; 124

additional journalists were identified for further study--83 daily journalists, and 41 weekly journalists; biographical research on those 124 journalists sought to identify possible additional journalist/politicians who sought or held elective public office on either the local, county, state, and/or national levels, and for additional information on their births, educations and training, political affiliations, journalistic professional affiliations, and other community activities.

Five of the 124 journalists were elected to public office on the local and/or county levels, and an additional three sought elective office during the years encompassed by the research. The total journalist/politicians numbered 29. Three groups of journalists are thus compared: 29 journalist/politicians, 41 weekly journalists, and 83 daily journalists. (The total of the three groups is 153, rather than 145, because several daily and weekly journalists worked on more than one newspaper during the period 1923-38.)

Hypotheses Data:

Birth

The birth dates of 129 of the 145 journalists were identified through biographical research. The oldest member of the group, Amherst Blakely, publisher and editor of the Rochester Daily Post and Bulletin, was born in 1842, making him about 81 years of age in 1923. The two youngest members of the group were born in 1903, making them about 20 years of age in 1923: David Silverman, starting in 1934 as managing editor at the Minneapolis Star, and later at the merged Minneapolis Star and Tribune until

1956; and J. Russell Wiggins, managing editor at the St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch from 1938 to 1944.

Birth dates of all three groups of journalists were concentrated primarily from 1860 to 1899, including 97% (28) of the journalist/politicians, 75% (62) of the daily journalists, and 71% (29) of the weekly journalists in the research. The births of the journalist/politicians were fairly evenly distributed over these years, with a slight increase from 1900 to 1909 (ten journalist/politicians were born during this decade).

Education/Journalism Training

A majority received journalism training on the job, including 22 (76%) of the journalist/politicians, 47 (57%) of the daily journalists, and 23 (56%) of the weekly journalists. Since most journalism schools in colleges and universities weren't established until after many of the journalists received their formal eduations, it is likely that many of the others also received their journalism training on the job.

In addition to on-the-job training, after high school, some of the journalists continued formal educations at colleges or business schools. The group with the highest number of college-educated members was the daily journalists with 15 (18%) who had attended college and 23 (28%) who had graduated, five with journalism degrees.[33]

Five of the 29 journalist/politicians (17%) attended college, and four (14%) were college graduates. The group with the fewest college-educated members was the weekly journalists; five (12%) attended college, and six (15%) graduated.

Journalism Professional Activities

Many of the 145 journalists were involved in journalism professional activities, including 24 (83%) of the 29 journalist/politicians, 36 (43%) of the 83 daily journalists, and 25 (61%) of the 41 weekly journalists.[34]

Politics

Most of the journalist/politicians in the study (27, or 93%) were affiliated with Minnesota's political parties, compared to 19 (23%) of the daily journalists, and 17 (41%) of the weekly journalists.

Data on journalists' party memberships reflect to some degree the political environment in Minnesota from 1923 to 1938, when the Republican Party was the state's strongest party, the Farmer-Laborites were ranked second in power, and the Democratic Party ranked third. With 13 Republicans, seven Farmer-Labor Party members, and seven Democrats, the journalist/politicians, when compared to the weekly and daily journalists in the research, was most reflective of this political power structure.

Some of the journalists were involved in party leadership positions. Among the daily journalists, for example, five of the 14 Republicans and three of the four Democrats held such positions; and among the weekly journalists, six of the ten Republicans, two of the Democrats, and both of the Farmer-Labor Party members, were party leaders.

Other Community Activities

A majority of the 145 journalists (90, or 62%) was involved in community religious, civic, and/or social organizations, and several held interests in businesses other than their newspapers.

In addition, some were noted for their special interests or involvements in public affairs, for example, Arthur Lang Hamilton, publisher of the Aitkin Republican (Aitkin County), known as a "good road enthusiast" and conservationist.

Findings

Public Office Holding of Journalists

Twenty-nine journalists were found to meet the definition of journalist/politician as used in the research, and, of this group, three sought state elective office; 21 (72%) were elected to state and/or national elective offices; and 12 held local/county elective public offices (seven held both state/national and local/county offices).

Seven (24%) of the 29 worked on eight daily newspapers, and 26 (90%) worked on 26 weekly newspapers; several of the group worked on more than one newspaper during the period of the study.

Twenty-two (85%) of the 26 journalist/politicians elected to public office remained in their journalism positions during their terms of office; four (15%) did not. Of the four journalist/politicians who left their journalism positions, one served as county attorney; another was sentenced to the federal penetentiary for libel, and left journalism on another occasion, in 1933, when he was elected to the United States House of Representatives; another sold his paper in 1925, the year after he was elected governor of the state of Minnesota; and another held only contributing editor positions while serving in state and local elective and appointive positions.

Evidence was found that one of the four left his newspaper because he perceived a possible conflict of interest, and he named his wife publisher and editor during his 20-year term as county attorney.[35]

Some of the journalists were appointed, rather than elected, to government/public service positions during the period of the study. This group includes 13 journalists (11%) from the non-journalist/politician group of 115, five of whom worked on weeklies, seven on dailies, and one worked on both daily and weekly newspapers. This group of 13 included four postmasters; one board of education member; two library board members; one park board member; three who were appointed to various state-level positions; and two who held federal-level appointments.

Hypotheses Findings

Hypothesis One:

The first hypothesis, that the rate of office holding of journalist/politicians would decrease over the period of the study, 1923-38, was not supported. To determine the rate, the total number of years of journalist/politicians' elective office holding was computed and found to total 187 years. Next, such years of office holding tabulated in four-year periods, as represented in Table One, showed the largest percentage of elective office holding years (59 years, or 32%) occurred during the last half of the period of the study, from 1931-34, and, over all, the rate of office holding of the 26 journalist/politicians (three sought public office, and were not elected) increased over the period of the study.

Hypothesis Two:

The second hypothesis, which predicts that journalist/politicians would tend to originate from smaller communities than non-journalist/politicians, was supported by data found (see Table Two for populations data of the journalists/ communities): 16 (55%) of the 29 journalist/politicians came from communities of fewer than 2,000 citizens, while 12 of the 41 weekly journalists (29%), and no daily journalists, came from communities of that size; only five (17%) journalist/politicians came from communities of more than 10,000, compared to 53 (63%) daily journalists, and 10 (24%) weekly journalists.[36]

Hypothesis Three:

Data only partly supported the third hypothesis, which assumed that education level may correlate with public office holding and that the journalist/politicians would have less formal college education than the others in the study. Nine journalist/politicians (31%) either attended or graduated from college; 38 (46%) of the daily journalists either attended or graduated from college; and, 11 (27%) of the weekly journalists either attended or graduated from college. Thus, the daily journalists as a group had more formal education than the journalist/politicians and weekly journalists, but the journalist/politicians were slightly more educated than the weekly journalists.

Hypothesis Four:

Data provide no support for the fourth hypothesis, which predicted that journalist/politicians would have a lower rate of

memberships and activities in professional journalistic organizations than weekly and daily journalists. Twenty-four (83%) of the journalist/politicians belonged to journalistic professional associations or organizations, compared to 36 (43%) of the daily journalists, and 25 (61%) of the weekly journalists.

Hypothesis Five:

Data support the fifth hypothesis, which assumed that the fluctuating fortunes of the Farmer-Labor Party might be related to the rate of elective public office holding of the Farmer-Labor Party journalist/politicians identified in the study. More specifically, this hypothesis predicts that the number of Farmer-Labor journalist/politicians would increase during the first years of the period, peak, and then decrease during the later years of the period.

Seven of the 29 journalist/politicians were affiliated with the Farmer-Labor Party. The rate of Farmer-Labor journalist/politicians holding office from 1923-38 slowly increased from one in 1923, to a high of six in 1933 and 1934, and then decreased during the last four years of the period.

Hypothesis Six:

Hypothesis six was only partly supported. Related to hypothesis one, which assumed a relationship between time and the rate of public office holding of journalists, it states that age would be related to public elective office holding among journalists, predicting that journalist/politicians as a group would be older than the other journalists studied. Calculations of the mean ages of the members of each group in

1923 reveal that journalist/politicians were a slightly older group than the daily journalists (the average age of journalist/politicians in 1923 was 45, while the average age of daily journalists that year was 43), but the journalist/politicians were a slightly younger group than the weekly journalists (the average age of weekly journalists in 1923 was 46).

Discussion and Conclusion

The research reported here, using collective biography, has explored an ethical/conflict of interest issue, by focusing on the personal, journalistic, and community lives of a group of Minnesota journalists. The research sought to determine if working Minnesota journalists in the 1920s and 1930s sought and held political office, and if so, whether there was a decrease of such public office holding over the two decades. In summary, the findings reveal that many Minnesota journalists did seek and hold elective public office on all government levels in the two decades, and that few left their journalism positions during terms of office. In addition, it was found that the rate of office holding by the journalist/politicians identified in the research increased, rather than decreased, during the period studied, the peak of such journalists' office-holding occurring from 1931 to 1934.

Because there is little evidence that the few who gave up their journalism positions did so because of concern about conflict of interest, it appears that some Minnesota journalists in the period 1923-38 were comfortable in serving dual roles in

their communities--that of journalist and public official. Due to the inherent difficulties of studying lives of an earlier time, the motivations, or consciences of the journalists are impossible to fathom, and questions about why they did not relinquish one position for the other cannot be addressed with any degree of certainty. Despite such problems, one can speculate that Minnesota journalist/politicians did not relinquish one position for the other because it never occurred to them that professional ethics was an issue. Examinations of proceedings of the annual meeting of the Minnesota Editorial Association show no sessions on the topics of professional ethics were conducted.[37] This, with the absence of a Minnesota code of ethics and lack of journalism training that might stress ethics, could explain much of what may, at first blush, appear to be an absence of conscience regarding this ethical issue. Indeed the words of one Minnesota Editorial Association president suggest that Minnesota editors considered political activity as natural:

> Not only has the profession been recognized by a call to one of its number to the executive office of the state [Theodore Christianson, who was elected Governor of Minnesota in 1924], but the legislative halls, as well have taken a goodly share of its numbers from the ranks of newspaper men and is profitting proportionately thereby. In all directions the country editors are answering the call to other public service, and while it must be recognized that every good citizen owes a civic duty to his town, county, state and nation there is question that this duty can be more surely or more ably performed in any place other than at the head of the good country weekly newspaper from which these men are being called.[38]

The president did caution, however, "It is hoped that we will not be called upon for too great a sacrifice from our able ranks, to the detriment of our own work and the public welfare

that is dependent on it."[39] While the president's statements might imply recognition of a possible conflict of interest, it also appears he may have been concerned about the amount of time given each career.

The findings further suggest that certain variables, including journalists' educations, political affiliations, and places of origin (in terms of community size), may be related to amount of public-office holding. Such is suggested through analysis of data which reveal that the journalist/politicians tended to come from smaller communities than the other journalists in the study; they had less formal education than the study's group of daily journalists, and more formal education than the study's weekly journalists; and the Farmer-Labor Party's political fortunes seem to correspond to the rate of Farmer-Labor journalists holding elective public office. But because of the preliminary nature of the research and relatively small sample, such variables, and others as yet unidentified, should be further studied for possible relationships to cognizance of conflict-of-interest issues.

The results of this study raise additional questions which might be addressed in future research. The findings are likely skewed because of the difference in the numbers of daily and weekly journalists identified for study. Future research might more carefully ascertain the proper proportions between such groups of journalists in Minnesota, and control the numbers accordingly.

Further studies might also explore additional relationships

between journalists and public office holding, such as the relationship between journalists' community activities other than political or journalistic and their rate of elective public office holding, or others as yet unidentified.

In addition, new research could explore possible relationships between journalist/politicians' political activities, public office holding, and the content of their newspaper columns; and how the data collected might compare to that from other time periods, different states (such as Missouri, where the state editorial association published a code of ethics with a clause specifically warning against mixing journalism with public office holding), or other groups of journalists.

NOTES:

[1]The contemporary debate on media ethics was initiated in 1947 when the Hutchins Commission published their famous work, A Free and Responsible Press (Chicago: University of Chicago Press). Through publication of this work, the members of the commission forwarded the concept of a socially responsible press, touching off a debate which generated further works on media ethics. Such works include, among others: Wilbur Schramm and William L. Rivers, Responsibility in Mass Communication (New York: Harper and Row, 1957); J. Edward Gerald, The Social Responsibility of the Press (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1963); and John C. Merrill, The Imperative of Freedom: A Philosophy of Journalistic Autonomy (New York: Hastings House, 1974). In Communication: Ethical and Moral Issues (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1973), author Lee Thayer offers academics' viewpoints on various aspects of media ethics, including ethics and the press, advertising, television, polling, and public relations, but none of the material presented focuses on journalistic conflicts of ineresets. See Clifford C. Christians' article, "Fifty Years of Scholarship in Media Ethics," Journal of Communication 27:19-29 (Autumn 1977), for further assessments of these and other works on media ethics.

[2]Willard Grosvenor Bleyer, Main Currents in the History of American Journalism (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1927); Alfred McClung Lee, The Daily Newspaper in America, The Evolution of a Social Instrument (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937); Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism, A History: 1690-1960, 3rd edition (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962); Sidney Kobre, Development of American Journalism (Dubuque, Ia.: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1969); Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, op. cit.

[3]Encyclopedia Americana, International Edition (Vol. 7, Danbury, Conn.: Grolier Incorporated, 1984), p. 538.

[4]In 1979, for example, a Duluth, Minnesota journalist was fired by the Duluth Herald and News-Tribune for becoming a political candidate, and in 1983, a Minneapolis newspaper columnist was suspended for a week without pay for helping write Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich's inaugural address. St. Paul Pioneer Press, June 1, 1979, p. 3. See "Readers Protest When Paper Suspends Columnist," Excerpts 4:2 (Feb. 9, 1983), p. 1, for an article regarding the columnist's suspension. Excerpts, a newsletter of the Organization of Newspaper Ombudsmen, reported on the reactions of Minneapolis Star and Tribune readers to the suspension of columnist Jim Klobuchar. While the Star and Tribune's management saw Klobuchar's act as a clear conflict of interest, a majority of the more than 25 readers who wrote or called concerning the suspension disagreed.

[5]Washington Post writer Richard Harwood commented on the "no-man's land of journalistic ethics and the utter confusion in this business over such simple concepts as conflict of interest,"

in "Newspaper Ethics: The Confusion Over Conflict of Interest," The Quill 59 (July, 1971), pp. 20-22. And Cassandra Tate, managing editor and special assignment writer for the Lewiston (Idaho) Morning Tribune, in a 1978 article described the diverse reactions from her fellow Tribune journalists when she questioned them on how involved in the activities and issues of their communities they believed publishers and journalists should become; their responses ranged from complete avoidance of personal community involvements, to the belief that community associations should not only be permitted, but recommended, for such can enhance a journalist's ability to do his or her job. Cassandra Tate, "Conflict of Interest: A Newspaper's Report on Itself," Columbia Journalism Review 17:44-48 (July/August, 1978).

[6]Some of the scholarly and professional literature now call any kind of activities engaged in while one practices journalism a conflict of interest, and some activities have been so labeled because of changing concepts of journalism's function. See, for example, Charles W. Bailey, Conflicts of Interest: A Matter of Journalistic Ethics, A Report to the National News Council (New York: National News Council, 1984). Several earlier works also dealt with journalistic conflicts of interest, including the community and political involvements of journalists. John L. Hulteng's The Messenger's Motives: Ethical Problems of the News Media (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976), for example, contains a chapter on conflict of interest which highlights the importance of journalists remaining independent of outside, conflicting involvements, and he names community and political involvements as especially problematic.

Hulting sees the appearance of impropriety as the most negative effect of journalists' involvements in community and political affairs, suggesting that before becoming involved, journalists should ask themselves whether their independence is assured if they develop such relationships; and secondly, Hulteng suggests that even if confident they can remain independent, such journalists should question whether the public will doubt their credibility.

Also see Ethics and the Press: Readings in Mass Media Morality (New York: Hastings House, 1975), an anthology of readings on media ethics edited by John C. Merrill and Ralph D. Barney, which deals with newspaper and broadcasting ethics, and focuses on a variety of ethical philoscphies and problems of journalists. Although no article covers primarily the political or community involvements of journalists, several comment on them.

Clifford G. Christians, Kim B. Rotzoll, and Mark Fackler's 1983 book, Media Ethics (New York: Longman), describes in a chapter entitled "Business Presures," how journalists may endanger their credibility by involvement in conflict-of-interest situations. According to the authors, "Increasingly now, enlightened owners and executives realize their special obligation precisely because news--and not widgets--is their

business," p. 29.

[7]There is a vast amount of scholarly literature on the professions and the professionalization process, and such sources often discuss professional ethics. Several well-known examples are A. M. Carr-Saunders and P. A. Wilson, The Professions (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933; reprinted by Frank Cass, 1964); and Howard M. Vollmer and Donald L. Mills, editors, Professionalization (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1966).

[8]The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and The Development of Higher Education in America (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1971), p. 80-81.

[9]David L. Sills, editor, International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, v. 3 (U.S.A.: The Macmillan Co. and Free Press, 1968), 242-245.

[10]Andrew Jackson, U.S. President from 1829 to 1836, appointed numerous journalists to political office in the 1830s, and his closest advisers, his so-called kitchen cabinet, included journalists. In the 1840s, Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune, served in the U.S. Congress and ran for U.S. President in the 1870s; in the 1880s, Joseph Pulitzer, editor of the New York World, served in Congress, and, in the early 20th century, William Randolph Hearst, publisher of the San Francisco Examiner and New York Journal, William Allen White, publisher of the Emporia (Kansas) Gazette, and Warren G. Harding, publisher of the Marion (Ohio) Star, sought political office. See Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, The Press and America, 4th edition (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978); and for additional information on these journalists and politicians, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (Boston: Little, Brown, 1945); Robert Vincent Remini, Andrew Jackson (New York: Twayne Publications, 1966); Robert K. Murray, The Harding Era, Warren G. Harding and His Administration (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1969); John D. McKee, William Allen White: Maverick on Main Street (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975); W. A. Swanberg, Citizen Hearst (New York: Scribner's, 1961); W. A. Swanberg, Pulitzer (New York: Scribner's, 1967); and for further descriptions of editors' political activity, see Donald H. Stewart, The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period (Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1969).

[11]Nelson Antrim Crawford, The Ethics of Journalism (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924), p. 184.

[12]Harvey Saalberg, "The Canons of Journalism: A 50-Year Perspective," Journalism Quarterly 50:731-34 (Winter 1973). The entire code is reprinted in each annual volume of the proceedings of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

[13]Crawford, op. cit., p. 200. The Minnesota Newspaper Association (MNA), first formed by pioneer Minnesota journalists

in 1867 as the Minnesota Editorial Association, has never drafted and adopted a code of ethics, but the MNA established one of the nation's first journalistic review boards, the Minnesota Press Council, charged with reviewing the behavior of Minnesota journalists. Emery and Emery, op. cit., p. 516.

[14]Clifford G. Christians and Catherine L. Covert, Teaching Ethics in Journalism Education (The Teaching of Ethics, Vol. 3, New York: The Hastings Center, 1980), p. 2. See pp. 1-6 for an historical overview of journalism education as it relates to ethics. According to these media scholars, the country's first schools of journalism at colleges and universities included the establishment of the Columbia University school in 1903; and those at universities at Illinois, 1904; Wisconsin, 1905; Missouri, 1908; and Northwestern, 1921. (Emery and Emery, op. cit., p. 513, says the country's first school of journalism was established at the University of Missouri in 1908.) Minnesota's first school of journalism was founded at the University of Minnesota in 1927. See Proceedings, 58th Annual Convention for the Minnesota Editorial Association, 1925, for discussion of events leading up to its founding.

[15]Christians and Covert, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

[16]Ethics and Practices in Journalism (New York: Ray Long and Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1932), p. 64. Henning does not address whether other circumstances exist when a journalist may legitimately be involved in political affairs, but he seems to imply they do. His exactitude on political involvement as a conflict of interest was unusual among other books of the era, some of which, such as Nelson Antrim Crawford's The Ethics of Journalism, op. cit., and Leon Nelson Flint's Conscience of a Newspaper (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1930), in somewhat lofty fashion, sermonize on the moral debt journalists owe to their professional community and the public. Although amply discussing the importance of independence and objectivity, such books do not define the conflict of interest issue as such, and rarely offer suggestions on how journalists might remain independent.

Crawford warns against using newspapers to further political views but doesn't discuss personal involvement in politics as a precipitator of partisanship in news coverage. Among a selection of ethics codes adopted by professional asssociations and newspapers up to 1924 (listed in an appendix to Crawford's book), only the Missouri code, discussed above, specifically warns against political or other personal involvements as leading to biased, nonobjective news. The other codes are less specific, referring to the need for journalists to be independent, nonpartisan, fair and impartial. Crawford, op. cit., pp. 183-240.

University of Kansas professor Leon Nelson Flint warns that a newspaper seen as little more than a political party organ can win little influence in the community; later he seems to excuse

journalists whose papers do not appear to be as overtly political, even though they may have political ties, or hold public office. In a discussion of editors' responsibilities, Flint says,

> ...criticism hardly applies to the man in public life who is a bona fide publisher or editor, though the measure of his selfish designs, and the extent to which he appears to be using his newspaper as a tool, will determine its influence. Some forty members of the 68th Congress were editors or publishers.

Op. cit., p. 116. The closest Flint comes to stating a position on journalists' participation in community organizations is a brief reference to independence from friends and enemies, when he argues that,

> An independence that puts the editor on a level above too many outside considerations, above too much regard for victory or defeat in all undertakings, is the best foundation for abiding self-respect and genuine success.

Ibid., p. 150.

Other literature is directed primarily toward the rural journalist or students of the rural journalism field, such as The Country Weekly (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1920), a text written by Phil C. Bing, an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota. Bing warns that "eternal vigilance is necessary for the editor, and careful thought to determine what stand shall be taken on each issue as it arises." He continues, "It is undoubtedly best for [the journalist] to keep himself as free as may be from all entangling alliances which might conceivably hamper him in the free and unrestricted right of decision." See p. 126.

[17]Lee, op. cit., p. 182. Journalism historian Frank Luther Mott agreed in a journalism history text published in 1962; he noted, "The trends toward independence of party were felt in rural and small city journalism quite as much as in that of the metropolitan centers." He later seems to contradict this when he asserts that this tendency toward nonpartisan journalism was somewhat less marked in the weekly than in the daily press of the period. Mott, op. cit., p. 729.

[18]Compare the picture of the 1920s in Frederick Lewis Allen's Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the Nineteenth Twenties (New York: Harper, 1931), to that portrayed in Geoffrey Perrett's America in the Twenties: Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982). Perrett purports to offer a more complete picture of the 1920s which contrasts strongly with Allen's less sober, more glamorous portrayal of the period.

Of the hundreds of books and articles on the 1920s and

1930s, only a few, general works are noted here. For a broad, but comprehensive, overview of both decades, see William Miller, A New History of the United States,, 3rd edition (New York: Dell Publishing, 1968). Paul L. Murphy's book, The Meaning of Freedom of Speech, First Amendment Freedoms From Wilson to FDR (Contributions in American History, No. 5, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1972), offers a comprehensive discussion of the development of the concept of freedom of speech, and includes much pertinent information on the Red Scare, Ku Klux Klan, the relations between labor and business, and the worker strikes of the period. Also see Zechariah Chafee, Jr., Free Speech in the United States (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941). Robert S. and Helen M. Lynd's Middletown in Transition (New York: Harcourts, Brace & Co., 1929), in its description of the ethnography of a 1920s American middlewestern community, destroys some of the period's stereotypes. Caroline F. Ware, Greenwich Village 1920-1930 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1935), studies an immigrant community adjusting to city life.

[19]The most comprehensive history of the state of Minnesota is Theodore C. Blegen's Minnesota, A History of the State (Minneapolis, Minn.: Univesity of Minnesota Press, 1963).

[20]For general discussions and interpretations of the history of newspapers during this period, see the already cited works of Willard Grosvenor Bleyer, Alfred McClung Lee, Frank Luther Mott, Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, and Sidney Kobre.

Many biographies and newspaper histories have been published which discuss certain newspapers and journalists of the period. Other works focus closely on aspects of the period, such as Edwin Emery's, History of American Publishers Association (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1950), and Simon Michael Bessie's, Jazz Journalism: The Story of the Tabloid Newspaper (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1938). See annotated bibliographies, such as Warren C. Price, The Literature of Journalism (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1959), and Warren C. Price and Calder M. Pickett, An Annotated Journalism Bibliography, 1958-68 (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1970), for additional citations.

[21]See Ayer's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals (Philadelphia, Pa.: N.W. Ayer and Son, Inc., 1931); Population (Occupations by States, Vol. 4, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1933, p. 835; and, Proceedings, 58th Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Editorial Association, p. 6. Proceedings includes information on events leading up to the school's establishment.

[22]Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, op. cit., pp. 511-512; and Frank Luther Mott, op. cit., pp. 725-27. The paragraphs of the "Canons of Journalism" which relate to conflict of interest read as follows:

> Freedom from all obligations except that of fidelity to the public interest is vital.
>
> Partisanship, in editorial comment which knowingly departs from the truth, does violence to the best spirit of American journalism; in the news columns it is subversive of a fundamental principle in the profession.

[23]Millard L. Gieske, Minnesota Farmer-Laborism (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), p. 129. See also Theodore C. Blegen, op. cit., pp. 477-80, and 521-529.

[24]Not included in the study were newspapers intended for special audiences; examples include trade newspapers, such as the Lake District Advocate, published in Minneapolis, from 1922 to 1933, to further the interest of the city's Lake area's business community; newspapers published as organs of political parties; and student-body newspapers, such as the University of Minnesota's student newspaper. Foreign-language newspapers were also excluded because of potential difficulties in translating biographical and other material about such papers' owners or editors. Also excluded were general-circulating newspapers published less often than weekly.

[25]Only county seat papers were included in the sample in an effort to limit the size of the sampling frame, while at the same time geographically representing the entire state's press.

[26]Some of the newspapers examined did not list any such individuals, and, in such cases, efforts were made to examine local historical records--such as newspaper histories--which might provide identities.

[27]Such individuals were titled executive editors, editors-in-chief, managing editors, and associate editors, and sometimes editors were in charge of departments within newspapers, such as the city desk, or women's pages. The publisher and editor-in-chief positions were sometimes held by the same individual, particularly on the smaller newspapers. Journalists excluded from the research were reporters, columnists, business managers, circulation managers, advertising managers, and others holding positions that did not include supervisory responsibilities for the content of the newspapers in the research.

[28]Appointive positions, such as local postmasterships, or legislative aides on the state level, were excluded, even though these often resulted from political activity on the part of the appointee.

[29]To determine which Minnesota journalists during 1923 to 1938 held positions in the state legislature, the governorship, or positions in the United States Senate or House of Representatives, the 1923-38 editions of Minnesota Legislative Manuals (St. Paul, Minn.: Minnesota Secretary of State, published

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every other year) were searched. In addition, Bruce White etal., compilers Minnesota Votes, Election Returns by County for President, Senators, Congressmen, and Governors, 1857-1977, (St. Paul, Minn.: Minnesota Historical Society, 1977), lists the state's higher elected officials.

[30]Research was conducted within a variety of historical sources including newspaper articles; state, county and local histories; local public records; and many others. The researcher has compiled a listing of all biographical data and sources on each of the 144 journalists ultimately included in the study.

[31]Phillip J. Tichenor, George A. Donohue and Clarice N. Olien, Community Conflict and the Press (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1980), p. 51; and A. W. Finifter and P. R. Abramson, "City Size and Feelings of Political Competence," Journalism Quarterly 39:189-198.

[32]The information in this section represent totals and breakdowns of data that became the base for analysis.

[33]Some of the journalists identified as having attended college may have graduated, but the biographical material did not specifically suggest such. The five with journalism degrees were William O. Merritt, a graduate of the University of Iowa's journalism program; Basil L. "Stuffy" Walters from Indiana University; Paul A. Anderson, University of Minnesota; and Harry E. Rasmussen and Paul A. Anderson, the University of Missouri.

[34]Some participated in more than one professional organization, such as daily journalist/politician Fred Schilplin, Sr. (Stearns County), who held memberships in the Minnesota and national editorial associations and was also president of the Northwest Daily Press Association; William F. Duffy (Scott County), a weekly journalist, was treasurer of the Minnesota Editorial Association and president of the Second District Editorial Association; and daily and weekly journalist Henry Zehring Mitchell (Beltrami County) was president of the Minnesota Editorial Association in 1925, president of the Northwest Daily Press Association in 1930, and active in committees of the National Editorial Association.

Other journalism organizations Minnesota journalists were involved in included: Sigma Delta Chi, Southern Minnesota Editorial Association, the Associated Press (both the national organization and the Minnesota chapter), National Women's Press Club, Theta Sigma Phi, National League of American Pen Women, Zonta International, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, Newspaper Guild of the Twin Cities, United Press, Winona Typographical Union, National Press Club, Inland Daily Press Association, Minnesota Press Club, First District Editorial Association, Audit Bureau of Circulation, London Press Club, Sibley County Editorial Association, Red River Valley Editorial Association, North Star Press Association, and McLeod County Editorial Association.

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[35]Minnesota Press, 38:1:3 (January 1964).

[36]Population figures for the journalists' communities were cited in the 1923 edition of Ayer's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals (Philadelphia, Pa.: N.W. Ayer & Sons, Inc., 1923).

[37]Proceedings of the annual meetings of the Minnesota Editorial Association, 1923 to 1938.

[38]Proceedings of the 58th Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Editorial Association, 1925, p. 6.

[39]Ibid., p. 7.